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Scouting for Pests in Iowa Cover Crops

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Scouting for Pests in Iowa Cover Crops

Abstract

Landscape diversification, including the use of cover crops, can provide habitat and forage for beneficial insects. This is especially true in the spring when there is a lack of food. Alternatively, cover crops can also support field crop pests, including moths, beetles, flies and slugs. The early spring vegetation, sometimes called a “green bridge,” provides resources until the row crops emerge. In the past, several green bridge pests have become common in Iowa.

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Scouting for Pests in Iowa Cover Crops

April 24, 2017



Landscape diversification, including the use of cover crops, can provide habitat and forage for beneficial insects. This is especially true in the spring when there is a lack of food. Alternatively, cover crops can also support field crop pests, including moths, beetles, flies and slugs. The early spring vegetation, sometimes called a “green bridge,” provides resources until the row crops emerge. In the past, several green bridge pests have become common in Iowa.

True armyworm

Biology: widespread U.S. pest that migrates to Iowa annually; 2-3 generations each summer; females attracted to grass and lay egg masses in aggregated areas.

Injury: caterpillars are mobile and nocturnal; young caterpillars skeletonize leaves but leave the midrib behind; older caterpillars can consume leaves; VE-V5 corn and V(n) soybean is most susceptible; significant stand loss is possible.



Black cutworm

Biology: widespread U.S. pest that migrates to Iowa annually; 2-3 generations each summer; females attracted to green vegetation lay eggs randomly.

Injury: caterpillars are mobile and nocturnal; caterpillars defoliate leaves and tunnel in plant, and are capable of cutting seedlings at soil; VE-V7 corn and V(n) soybean is most susceptible; significant stand loss is possible.



Common stalk borer

Biology: widespread U.S. pest that overwinters in Iowa; 1 generation each summer; females randomly lay eggs along ditches in fall.

Injury: caterpillars are mobile; young caterpillars infest grass and older caterpillars infest corn, soybean and ragweed; V5-V10 corn and V(n) soybean is most susceptible; significant stand loss is possible but aggregated at field edges.



How to scout for pests in cover crops

- Walk through fields and note defoliated, clipped or shredded leaves; and dying, dead or missing plants
- Look for frass pellets and webbing in and around plants
- Dig around plants, move debris, pull plants, spilt stalks and look in soil crevices

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Dr. Erin Hodgson started working in the Department of Entomology at Iowa State University in 2009. She is an associate professor with extension and research responsibilities in corn and soybeans. She has a general background in integrated pest management (IPM) for field crops. Dr. Hodgson's curre...